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U. S. Department of Agriculture
Agricultural Research Administration
Bureau of Human Nutrition and Home Economics
July 1950

THE BUREAU OF HUMAN NUTRITION AND HOME ECONOMICS

What it isA research bureau, one of the six comprising the Agricultural Research Administration of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

The Bureau's Authority ...Under the authority of the Act of May 15, 1862, establishing the U. S. Department of Agriculture, the Congress of the United States provides funds to the Bureau each year "for conducting

"....investigations of the relative utility and economy of agricultural products for food, clothing and other uses in the home

"....economic investigations, including housing and household buying, as have for their purpose the improvement of the rural home

"....for coordinating nutrition services made available by federal, state and other agencies

"....and for disseminating useful information on these subjects"

When EstablishedJuly 1, 1923, absorbing the Office of Home Economics which had been created in 1914 as an enlargement of the human nutrition investigations authorized by the Congress in 1894.

Bureau ObjectivesThrough research, the Bureau seeks to provide scientific facts of immediate use:

To consumers, to help them better select and use available goods, and apply science and art to the improvement of techniques in household tasks and to the management of money, time and energy.

To extension workers, teachers and others working directly with families to help enlarge their background of scientific and technical knowledge of farm family living, foods and nutrition, textiles and clothing, housing, and household equipment.

To producers to help them develop new products or better adapt present ones to consumer needs and desires.

To public leaders, to help them understand the effect of economic conditions on American home life and the needs of the Nation's families.

Where LocatedHeadquarters of the Bureau are in the South Building of the U. S. Department of Agriculture in Washington, D. C. Here are conducted economic and statistical studies and are located the informational and administrative services of the Bureau.

Laboratory investigations are carried on in three buildings at the Agricultural Research Center near Beltsville, Maryland. Additional Bureau staff members working on cooperative projects are at state agricultural experiment stations and other research institutions throughout the country.

Cooperative ResearchThe Bureau conducts its research both independently and in cooperation with other Bureaus of the Department, other Federal agencies, state experiment stations, and other research agencies. It participates in the Department's contract research program.

Cooperative research may consist of stationing Bureau personnel at the headquarters of the cooperating agency for work on common problems, in accordance with joint planning. Or it may consist in undertaking in the Bureau's laboratories, work on certain aspects of a common problem while other aspects are studied simultaneously elsewhere by staff of one or more agencies according to a predetermined plan.

At present, cooperative studies are under way in which the Bureau is participating with institutions in 21 states, in addition studies on nutritional status and on housing, organized on a regional basis.

EmployeesHome economists trained for research in food, nutrition, textiles, clothing, housing and household equipment and men and women who are expert in physics, chemistry, bacteriology, economics, statistics and other sciences and in scientific and popular writing.

As of June 30, 1950, there were 128 professional and other workers in the Washington offices, 155 in the laboratories at the Agricultural Research Center and 211 collaborators and employees located in the states.

Publications from the BureauThe Bureau has about 150 bulletins available for distribution on request. Over half of these are for homemakers. The others, more technical in nature, are for research and professional workers. The annual distribution of these bulletins runs into millions of copies.

Many of its bulletins, of which the free supply is exhausted, can be purchased from the Government Printing Office. All are available in the principal public libraries and in most college and university libraries.

Total distribution of its popular publications through the Government Printing Office during its first 25 years amounted to over 115 million copies; of technical publications, more than 1 1/4 million.

In addition to the publications processed or printed by the government, many technical reports and popular articles are published in scientific and trade journals and in magazines.

THE BUREAU'S PROGRAM

In general Bureau research centers around four main questions with reference to food, clothing, shelter, and the other goods and services used in family living today. These questions relate to:

- (1) the magnitude of human needs and wants for these goods;
- (2) the inherent nature and value of the different products and the modifications brought about by processing. These determine the contribution that each can make toward satisfying human needs;
- (3) present levels of consumption of these goods by various population groups, and factors influencing consumption;
- (4) the gap between present and desirable levels and the shifts that would contribute to improvement in living and to increased demand for agricultural products.

Food and Nutrition: Determining the nutritive requirements of people; the composition and nutritive value of food to meet these needs; improved use of agricultural products, including food selection, care of food in the home and the development of suitable and improved methods of home food preparation and preservation.

Current research includes study of the food-energy requirements of children; the digestibility, physiological energy-value, and vitamin A value of selected foods; the effect of food intake and other factors upon nutritional status of population groups; the quantitative distribution of nutrients in foods as marketed and as eaten; studies of factors affecting the cooking and table quality of selected foods, development of new home, school and institutional recipes for foods in exceptional supply; and bacteriological and other technical problems of processing and packaging to improve techniques of home food preservation through freezing.

Family Economics: Investigating the quantities, the adequacy and the relative economy of food, clothing and other goods and services that are consumed by various population groups, the factors affecting consumption, particularly of the major items which serve as indicators of the levels of farm family living and household buying problems.

Current work includes studies of expenditures for family living in selected States and of the consumption of food, clothing, and other items as affected by income, family size, environment and other factors. The nutrient content of our national food supplies is appraised periodically; available data are being compiled and evaluated on the composition of foods as marketed and as eaten; and food budgets for institutional groups.

Textiles and Clothing: Emphasizing studies to assist homemakers with the selection, use and care of family clothing and textile articles and to help producers in the development of fibers, fabrics and garments for specific consumer uses.

Work is in progress on the serviceability of fabrics of different construction and composition; on technical problems pertaining to consumer use and the quality of clothing and household textile articles; and on problems of design and sizing in relation to their use. Research on the causes of deterioration of fabrics during use are continuing, with attention being given to their reconditioning and the relative efficiency of various household detergents.

Housing and Household Equipment: Involving studies of the housing needs of families and development of plans for rural houses with efficient work areas, adequate storage space and room and space arrangements for satisfying family living; and research to improve the selection of household equipment.

Current projects include the determination of space and facility needs in farm houses; design of built-in storage facilities and placement of equipment as related to working efficiency in kitchens and other work centers; cooperation in developing farm house plans for regional plan exchange service; development of standardized procedures for performance-testing of household equipment and of guides for selection, care and use of such equipment; and determination of requirements and of plans and specifications for farm home freezing and storage facilities for perishable foods.

